

A Sermon

in Memory of

His Most Gracious Majesty
King Edward vii.

by

Rev. W. T. Ferridge, D.D.

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In Memoriam.



A Sermon

preached in

St. Andrew's Church, Ottawa

on

Sunday Morning, May 15th, 1910

to commemorate the
death of

His Most Gracious Majesty,
King Edward vii.

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PRAYER BEFORE SERMON.

Almighty and ever-blessed God, by whom kings reign and princes decree justice, we beseech Thee to grant us Thy Divine consolation as we assemble here this day. We rejoice that Thy love is greater than the greatest human need ; that there is no care Thou canst not lighten, no sorrow Thou canst not assuage, no loss Thou canst not turn into noble gain. We thank Thee that, through the revelation of Thy Son, Jesus Christ, we are able to face without tremor or dismay even the last dread mystery of death ; to know that our poor vision does not measure all things, and that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee.

O Thou in whose hand our breath is, we bow before Thine unerring Providence in that Thou hast been pleased to remove from earth our late beloved King. We praise Thee that Thou didst deliver Him in other days of sore affliction, and didst enable Him to rule over us. To Thee, O God, be the glory for his wise and kindly sway, for all that he accomplished at home and abroad, for his courage and his faithfulness, and for the quiet confidence of that last hour when heart and flesh were failing. Into Thy hands, O merciful Father, we commit his spirit.

We pray Thee to grant Thy comfort to the Queen-mother in her loneliness, to bring to her remembrance all that is most fragrant and beau-

tiful in the days that are gone, to show her the thinness of the veil between that other realm and ours, that into the very heart of her sorrow there may come a holy joy, and round about her unrest Thy peace which passeth all understanding.

We beseech Thee to bless every member of the bereaved family, to comfort a mourning nation, and to grant that our common grief may bind us into closer fellowship with one another and with Thee.

God save and bless our Sovereign Lord; King George. Be pleased in this time of trial to strengthen him and guide him in all his ways. Preserve the love and loyalty of the people; direct the affairs of state; let peace abide throughout the Empire, and may there be a sincere purpose everywhere to obey Thy commandments.

Let Thy blessing rest upon her Gracious Majesty, Queen Mary, that, visited with Thy continual aid, she may be enabled to discharge the duties that devolve upon her.

Be with His Majesty's representative amongst us, and with this sorrowing land. May we be taught by our losses to rise to a firmer faith in Thee, in the riches of Thy power, the wisdom of Thy providence, the patience of Thy love. Assist us, as loyal subjects of the King, to do our part in upholding the honour of the British realm, and may we serve our country with all that is best in us, because we first serve Thee, who art Lord over all, blessed forevermore.

Glory be unto the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

"HONOUR THE KING."

1 Peter 2:17.

British subjects everywhere mourn the sudden exit of a beloved sovereign, and the rest of the world mourns with them. Twice before, the love and loyalty of the nation have been put to trial and not found wanting. In 1871, when the Prince of Wales was attacked with fever and lay at the point of death, the outburst of sorrow was only paralleled when Queen Victoria passed away. And after the crisis was over and recovery assured, the whole Empire joined in sincere thanksgiving to God. On the postponement of the King's coronation because of an illness so serious that for awhile it seemed doubtful whether the imposing ceremony would ever take place at all, once more the tension of universal grief was removed and the hearts of the people made glad. What words, then, shall describe our sense of loss now that the promise of earlier years has had its splendid fulfillment? In these previous alarms, there was a period of alternating hope and fear, and the possibility of a fatal issue had to be faced by anxious millions. But now that the end has really come, no one seems to have been prepared save, perhaps, the royal sufferer himself who knew already what it meant to have the dark shadow hovering over him, and did not shrink in the last dread hour.

Death visits alike the hovel and the palace, and in its presence differences of birth or station fall

into the background, and we think mainly of the common trial that sooner or later comes to all. The essential features of the scene in that royal chamber are repeated over and over again, the scene of a stricken home where a noble wife and mother keeps her vigil by the bedside, and the children and children's children are gathered round, and from the lips of the quiet central figure are heard the whispered words, "It is all over; but I think I have done my duty."

Within the space of a little more than nine years, no sovereign has effected as much as King Edward for the good of his people and the strengthening of their harmonious intercourse with other nations. On his accession to the throne, there was just a danger lest the John Bull point of view should be pushed to troublesome extremes. At once he set himself with an enthusiasm that never flagged to the noble task of fostering a spirit of international good-will. The alliance with Japan was a master-stroke which tended both to safeguard British interests in the East, and to check unwarrantable aggression on the part of other European powers. France, an ancient enemy, was turned into a devoted friend. Russia was conciliated, Italy induced to make a compact with France and Britain, Spain and Norway brought nearer by royal alliances, and Germany, more or less irritated at what might seem an enforced isolation, and ruled by an impulsive and ambitious Emperor, led to a better understanding by a kindly interview between the King and the Kaiser, and all important points of friction smoothed away. During his too short

reign, King Edward has made it more difficult for any nation, however aggressive, to take up arms hastily. He has boldly challenged the immemorial worship of the god of war; he has proved that there are better ways of preserving national honour than by a holocaust of ruin, and his name will go down to posterity as the greatest peace-maker of the modern world.

Nor have his interests been confined to foreign affairs. He has been equally solicitous for the conservation of harmony at home. Nothing that concerned the welfare of his people has seemed to him a matter of indifference. The poor, the sick, the unfortunate have never sought his sympathy in vain. He strove to build up commerce, to promote thrifty and industrious habits among the people, to secure to the meanest subject the guardianship of just law and the unfettered exercise of religious convictions, in short, to give to all their fair share of the blessings of earthly life. Until the inner history of the time is written, few will know how much he has done to check the violence of parties, to arbitrate between dangerous extremes on either side, to discourage the movements of pride and egotism, to cultivate a judicial temper of mind in dealing with affairs of state, and to inspire every public man with an unselfish patriotism which, whether his own opinions prevailed or not, desired first of all the prosperity and happiness of the whole commonwealth.

The passing of King Edward removes the most influential personality of our time. No doubt his long study of official questions, joined to mental gifts of a high order served him well in reaching

a correct estimate. Moreover, he brought to bear upon all his tasks the prestige of kingship in a vast and mighty empire. But these advantages, great as they are, would not alone have sufficed to make him great unless to them had been added the gifts of a warm human heart. The tact which is so often spoken of as one of his most distinctive characteristics grew out of his sympathy, out of his habit of looking at things from the other person's point of view as well as his own. It is not merely by the art of the trained diplomatist, but far more by the unaffected sincerity and kindness of his own nature that he drew even the prejudiced to him and disposed them to be genial. His remarkable success as a healer of strifes and a promoter of friendly sentiment is not so much the triumph of a powerful monarch as of a wise, winsome, and benevolent man.

Because of these qualities, Edward VII will always be enthroned in the affections of his people, a king indeed by right of kingly character. The democratic idea is dominant in this modern age; and though it may be manifest under varying forms of government, and at times assert itself in grotesque and mischievous ways, both Church and State are bound to feel the force of it. But the true aristocrat is never superfluous if we wish to avoid the possible peril of confusion and anarchy. And he must prove that he is an aristocrat not simply because of birth or station, but because he possesses a loving, sincere, and noble soul. It speaks volumes for our late King that without abridging his dignity, still less without stooping for a moment to the tricks of the

demagogue, he should have become the most popular figure in the whole of Europe.

So that, while the formal power of the Crown might seem to be less than in earlier times, King Edward has made it in many respects greater than ever before. Removed alike above the caprice of the despot and the passion of the mob, he viewed his kingship as a solemn trust and gave his life to the fulfillment of it. There are those who think that if he had been more careful of himself, he might yet be with us. But even so, it is not necessary to live; it *is* necessary to face obligations with undaunted mien, whatever the issue may be, or else forfeit the rewards of manliness. He came home to work, and incidentally he came home to die; but the work was his main concern rather than the possible hazard of it. Whether he actually uttered the words or not, "My back is to the wall; I will fight it out," it is certain that he exemplified the fighting instinct in the finest kind of way, and with that pluck which Britons love, he stood to his post like a sentinel, and amply redeemed the pledge made when he came to the throne, "As long as I have breath in my body, I will labour for the good and amelioration of my people." This strong sense of service as the highest task of kingship reveals the Christian gentleman, affords an illustrious object lesson which may well be followed by his subjects in all quarters of the globe, and will perpetuate his influence and keep his memory green now that he has gone from us. No one will wish to claim for King Edward, and he would have been the last to claim for himself absolute immunity from the

mistakes and failings of imperfect mortals. But he ruled long enough to persuade even the most sceptical of his intrinsic nobleness, and to make a permanent contribution to dignified views of the meaning of life, to the supreme value of duty, to the spirit of friendship among the nations, and to the growth of an Imperial sentiment, without bluster and yet without fear, through every part of his wide domain.

“The King is dead ; long live the King !” When the splendid reign of Queen Victoria came to an end, there were some who doubted in regard to the sequel. These doubts have received a most convincing reply, and it is not too much to say that the illustrious mother, of blessed memory, has been followed by a not less illustrious son. King George V. ascends the throne with noble ancestral traditions behind him, and cannot but feel their inspiring influence as he takes up the reins of government. Nor is he without excellent preparation for his high estate. He has already visited, in some cases more than once, almost every part of the British Empire. He has served a fine apprenticeship upon the sea. He has been for years a close student of public affairs, and has enjoyed the benefit of his royal father’s counsels, and been the intimate witness of his remarkable judgment and his ripe experience. The first speech from the throne rings true. After referring to the great loss which the nation shares with him, he says: “To endeavour to follow in his footsteps, and at the same time to uphold the constitutional government of these realms will be the earnest object of my life. I am deeply sensible

of the very heavy responsibilities which have fallen upon me. I know that I can rely upon Parliament and the people of these islands and my dominions beyond the seas for their help in the discharge of these arduous duties, and their prayers that God will grant me strength and guidance." And though his reign has begun in the midst of the keen strife of political parties, not likely to be long hushed even by what the poet-laureate calls The Truce of God, that fact need not cause either regret or misgiving. It is the English fashion to fight out battles to the end fairly and squarely, and when the smoke of conflict has died away, to emerge oftentimes into a broader and clearer atmosphere. Though the situation is a delicate one, the menace of it may easily be exaggerated by timid or unscrupulous observers. The sound common sense of the nation, and its loyal allegiance to the Crown can be trusted to deal alike with the extremes of iconoclastic radicalism and too sluggish conservatism in such a way as will best maintain the welfare of the whole Empire, and reinforce the strength of the new monarch in his honest desire to govern righteously.

As Canadians, this is not a time when we shall forget that we are part of the British realm. The shock of a sudden grief has been felt throughout our borders. There is a sense of bereavement not unlike that of children from whom a wise and loving father has been snatched away. And it will be strange indeed if this solemn pause does not remind us anew to be sober in our joys and heroic in our sorrows; to seize with ready insight the many opportunities which earth affords for the

service of others, that we may succour the weak, and guide the erring, and bring the angel of pity to darkened homes and careworn, broken hearts; to prove, amid the violence of evil passions, and the overmastering lust of gain that the destiny of man is not measured by the seen and temporal; to strive, by God's help, to rise to the stature of moral greatness, and bear about with us everywhere the marks of the Lord Jesus. No people in the world to-day have better reason to face the future with confidence than the dwellers in this favoured land. A steady stream of population flows towards us, all the while bringing our varied and magnificent resources into wider employment; for centuries we have enjoyed the priceless blessings of civil and religious freedom; we have been ruled on democratic principles, round which a firm bulwark is interposed both against the selfish insolence of rank, and the hysterics of popular passion; we share the glorious inheritance of Britain, and the qualities that have contributed to her renown may well find congenial and effective exercise amongst us; we are full of hope and equal to larger achievements that will enable us more and more, as years go on, to serve Imperial interests, and at the same time to develop our own life in a noble and self-respecting way. This is the Canadian outlook as the new king begins his rule over us; and it would be strange indeed if the inspiration of it did not beget the earnest resolve to escape everything that would degrade our intelligence, and narrow our ideals, and mar the strength and beauty of our character, that we may rise to a full sense of the

glorious obligations imposed upon us, not only as British subjects, but as servants of Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, and who shall reign forever and ever.



